



# ANXIETY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of Anxiety as a powerful motivator in our present day civilization in all quarters is increasing. Keeping this in view, the present study has been chalked out to examine anxiety among students in relation to gender, locality and type of school. Descriptive survey method has been employed on a sample of 150 secondary school students of ninth class. Comprehensive anxiety test by A.K.P. Sinha and L.N.K. Sinha was used to measure the anxiety level of students. Descriptive statistics like mean, S.D. and t-test was employed for data analysis. The findings revealed no significant difference in the level of anxiety of sec. school students in relation to gender while there was significant difference in the level of anxiety of sec. school students in relation to their locality and type of schools.

## Introduction

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in school-aged children and adolescents worldwide (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003). The prevalence rates range from 4.0% to 25.0%, with an average rate of 8.0% (Bernstein & Borchardt, 1991; Boyd, Kostanski, Gullone, Ollendick & Shek, 2000). These figures could be underestimated since anxiety among a large number of children and adolescents goes undiagnosed owing to the internalized nature of its symptoms (Tomb & Hunter, 2004). Anxiety is associated with substantial negative effects on children's social, emotional and academic success. Specific effects include poor social and coping skills, often leading to avoidance of social interactions, loneliness, low self-esteem, perceptions of social rejection, and difficulty forming friendships. Importantly, school avoidance, decreased problem-solving abilities, and lower academic achievement have also been noted as consequences. Anxiety is considered to be a universal phenomenon existing across cultures, although its contexts and manifestations are influenced by cultural beliefs and practices (Good & Kleinman, 1985; Guarnaccia, 1997).

In India, the main documented cause of anxiety among school children and adolescents is parents' high educational expectations and pressure for academic achievement (Deb, 2001). In India, this is amplified in secondary school where all 16-year old children attempt the Class X first Board Examination, known as the Secondary Examination. Results of the Secondary Examination are vital for individuals since this is the main determining criteria for future admission to a high quality senior secondary school and a preferred academic stream. There is fierce competition among students since the number of places in these educational institutions is fewer than the number of students. Therefore, parents urge their children to perform well in the first Board Examination and, to this end they may appoint three to four private tutors or more for special guidance. After the Secondary Examination, all students appear in the Class XII Final Board Examination known as the Higher Secondary Examination. Competition is again ferocious as performance in this examination determines university entrance.

Gender effects for anxiety disorders and symptoms have been found in studies of children and adolescents in English-speaking countries. Generally, more girls than boys develop anxiety disorders and symptoms. Adolescent girls report a greater number of worries, more separation and higher levels of generalized anxiety (Poulton, Milne, Craske & Menzies, 2001; Weiss & Last, 2001).

Students studied in government and public school face different type of environment. Difference in the method of teaching, different books & this create a difference in the level of their anxiety. The cause of students' anxiety as revealed by the study include: wide coverage of the syllabus, low awareness of career opportunities, their teacher and his teaching methods and lack of teaching aids / laboratory. Like wise the students in rural area face more anxiety than urban area because the Students in the rural areas are scared by (in descending order) job opportunities, wide coverage of the syllabus, lack of exposure, teacher's qualities and methodology more failures than passes. On the other hand, urban students registered their anxieties (in descending order) in too many calculations, more failures and too wide syllabus. There are many causes of anxiety like feeling of inadequacy, emotional conflict, mental conflict and frustration repression of self -assertive tendency and Socio economic status. Socioeconomic status has been found to be both related and unrelated to anxiety. Broadly, social disadvantage is associated with increased stress. In studies of adults, socioeconomic status has been found to impact both directly on rates of mental illness and indirectly via the influence of poverty and financial hardship on low and middle income groups.

With respect to mothers' employment status, research suggests that maternal

employment, by itself, is unlikely to impede a child's social and emotional development. In fact, the opposite may be true, for children of working mothers, particularly daughters, tend to be more independent, to enjoy higher self-esteem, and to hold higher educational and occupational aspirations and less stereotyped views of men and women than those whose mothers are not employed. Moreover, early studies of toddlers (Schechter, 1981), primary school-aged children and adolescents consistently established that children of employed mothers were as confident in social settings as children whose mothers remained at home and were somewhat more sociable with peers. In particular, clinical and nonclinical studies have identified parental rejection and control as risk factors for the development anxiety and anxiety disorders. The attributes of time spent with parents and the communication between parent and adolescent are important as measures of parent physical and emotional availability. For example, in terms of attachment, Moore and Hofferth (1979) found that working women spent half as much time caring for their children as did housewives, but their children still developed normal attachments to them. Other studies with young children have shown that the quality of the time the parents and children spend together, along with the making of adequate child-care arrangements, outweighs the quantity of time spent together.

## Improving Students' Performance by Reducing Anxiety

Iakovos Tsiplakides (2006) suggested the following interventions which were implemented in a variety of educational institutions to help learners overcome anxiety:

Project work was used due to the following benefits of project work in foreign language settings cited in the literature.

- Students are more personally involved, so they usually have increased motivation. They do not feel that they are constantly assessed.
- It is easier for them to focus on communication, rather than on accuracy, and are less concerned with language errors and the consequences of "imagined failure".

An additional advantage of project work is that students have an active role and responsibilities in the implementation of project work, which can boost their confidence and reduce the affect of perceptions of low ability in the target language.

## Establishing a learning community and a supportive classroom atmosphere

Creating a learning community that provides the environment for optimal motivation and a collaborative atmosphere can help reduce fear of errors. The following classroom interventions were made, drawing principally on suggestions for creating a supportive learning classroom community.

### a) Teacher-student's relations

A set of classroom rules and norms was negotiated with the student- making fun of a wrong answer was not accepted and a norm of mistake tolerance was ratified. Errors were considered a natural part of learning a foreign language and students were encouraged to ask for help without running the risk of embarrassment (Dörnyei, 2001).

In addition, teaching practices communicated expectations of success for all students for example: as far as grouping practices were concerned, groups were formed from mixed ability students, students were given equally academically challenging tasks, and the same questioning strategies were used for all students, so that they realized that there was no differential treatment with respect to their language performance and out of school support.

**b) Providing indirect rather than direct correction**

We avoided direct, on the spot correction in speaking activities, since it can undermine student's confidence and because it discourages learners especially anxious learners.

(Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Anxious students that they should aim at continuing a speaking activity, despite making errors for example: the teacher provided a relaxed atmosphere so that the students had an opportunity to continue speaking despite making a mistake.

**c) Teacher immediacy**

Both Verbal (use of humor, use of student first names) and Nonverbal (eye contact, positive gestures) types of immediacy behavior were employed, since they can reduce anxiety and impact positively on motivation to learn.

**d) Provision of praise**

We soon realized that praising these students in front of their classmates for a minor accomplishment had a negative effect, since they considered it as an indication that the teacher had little confidence in their abilities. As a result, non-verbal praise (for example: a positive head movement) was most often used, instead of direct verbal praise.

**Justification of the Study**

Due to rapid industrialization and technological progresses and also socio cultural changes, today man is faced with danger of war, economic hardships, communal and racial prejudices and environmental pollution and above all, a fast changing social structure that is becoming more complex day by day. These entire problems have direct influence on human life especially on children. With the passage of time and with the advancement of the science, there is tremendous increase in the level of study. The world is now becoming more and more competitive and the desire to achieve high puts a lot of pressure on students which cause tension and anxiety among Sec. School student. So, anxiety has become an essential part of modern life and has permeated all sphere of life. The importance of Anxiety as a powerful influence in our present day civilization in all quarters is increasing. The effect of anxiety on academic achievement of the child seems to be quite significant where the individual under social and psychological pressure tries to achieve more and more. If one has to excel or succeed in his career, he/she has to overcome a number of barriers which are of both external as well as internal in nature. The external barriers are related to the environment in which the individual resides and the facilities he enjoys over there. The internal barriers to one's success are related to the personality traits of that individual. These personality traits or characteristics are very much essential for getting success. Some of the major personality characteristics that can hamper or prove to be detrimental in one's success include anxiety level. It often leads to problems concentrating while studying and remembering information while completing tests, which makes the students, feel helpless and like a failure. So, it was thought worthwhile by the investigators to study the level of anxiety among secondary school students. The results of the present study will help in knowing the level and differences in academic anxiety of the high school students. At the present time competition increases to such level which increases the pressure to its extreme level and a very limited number of studies have addressed anxiety among school-aged children and adolescents in India, and because of the seriousness of its adverse consequences, it was considered important to explore this issue further. So the need arises to study anxiety among secondary school students in relation to gender, locality and type of school.

**Objectives of the Study**

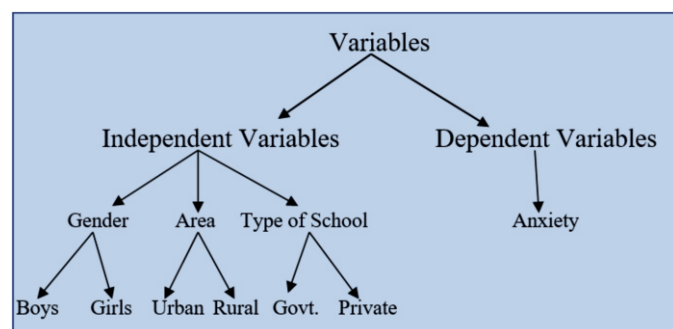
- To study the level of anxiety of Secondary School Students.
- To compare level of anxiety of Sec. School Students in relation to Gender, Locality and Type to school.

**Method of the Study**

Descriptive Survey Method was employed in this study.

**Variables of the Study**

The schematic design of variables used in the present study has been shown as under:

**Sample**

A sample of 150 students studying in ninth class of secondary schools was selected from Bhiwani Distt by using random sampling technique. The breakup detail of sample has been given below:

**Table-2: Breakup Details of Sample**

S. N.	Name of school	Gender		Locality	Type of school
1	Vaish Sr. Sec. School, Baund kalan	Boys (n=16)	Girls (n=13)	Rural (n=25)	Private (n=27)
2	Govt. High school, Baund kalan	boys (n=16)	girls (n=13)	Rural (n=25)	Govt. (n=33)
3	Govt. Girls Secondary School, Baund kalan	boys (n=16)	girls (n=13)	Rural (n=25)	Govt. (n=34)
4	Bhiwani public School, Bhiwani	boys (n=16)	girls (n=13)	Urban (n=37)	Private (n=27)
5	Vaish Model school, Bhiwani	boys (n=16)	girls (n=13)	Urban (n=38)	Private (n=29)
Total		83	67	150	150

**Tool Used**

Comprehensive anxiety test by A.K.P. Sinha and L.N.K. Sinha was used to measure the anxiety level of students.

**Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The present study has been designed to study anxiety among sec. school students in relation to some demographic variables viz. Gender, Locality and Type of School. To obtain the objectives of the study, mean, S.D. and t-test has been calculated and reported in the following table-2.

**Table -2: Anxiety Level of Sec. School Students of Sample under Study**

Sample	N	Mean	S.D.
Sec. School Students	150	31	18

The table-2 represents the anxiety level of students taken under study. The Mean score of anxiety level of students is 31 which come in the category of extremely high. This means that students of sample under study do more worry and show unease behavior. This is true in present scenario as students are under pressure of their parents, teachers and their peer group who expects more from them.

**Table -3: t-value for difference in Anxiety level of students of Secondary School in relation to Gender, Locality and Type of School**

Variables	Category	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Gender	Boys	83	31	18	0.36(NS)
	Girls	67	30	16	
Locality	Urban	75	35	13	3.40**
	Rural	75	26	19	
Type of School	Govt.	67	42	11	9.52**
	Private	83	22	16	

NS: Not Significant

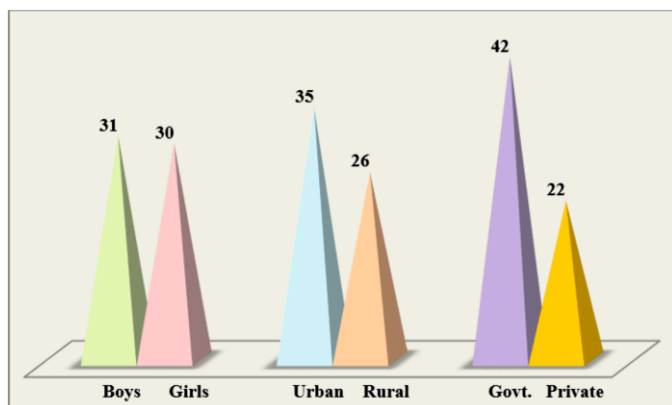
\*\* Significant at 0.01 Level

The Mean score of anxiety level of boys and girls is 31 and 30 respectively which clearly exhibits the extremely high level of anxiety among boys and girls both. 't'-value (0.36) vide table-3 is not significant leads to the conclusion that boys and girls do not have significant difference in their anxiety level. Both groups are under similar level of stress. While mean examination clearly exhibits that the level of anxiety is higher in boys than girls. On the contrary, more girls than boys develop anxiety disorders and symptoms, generally. Adolescent girls report a greater number of worries, more separation anxiety, and higher levels of generalized anxiety (Poulton, Milne, Craske & Menzies, 2001; Weiss & Last, 2001).

These findings conflicts with previous research regarding adolescent anxiety in developed countries wherein girls are more likely to develop anxiety symptoms and disorders (Campbell & Rapee, 1994; Costello, Egger & Angold, 2003; Poulton, Milne, Craske & Menzies, 2001; Weiss & Last, 2001). This difference may be attributed to cultural practices in Indian society. Despite the context of domestic change brought about by globalization, underlying patriarchal structures persist wherein boys continue to face more pressure regarding their proper choice of vocation and future career (Deb, 2001). However, at the same time, it is relevant to highlight that the difference between mean anxiety scores of boys and girls, although statistically significant, is not contextually substantial. Anxiety levels of the adolescent girls, therefore, cannot be dismissed simply because the levels are, on average, lower than those for the adolescent boys. As new consumers in an ever-growing competitive education marketplace, families have differential expectations about the likely outcomes of education for boys and girls. Investment in schooling for daughters is seen primarily as a route to attaining

better marriage prospects. Investment in sons' education, however, is related to the expectation that their future employment will provide familial security.

Table-3 reveals that mean score of anxiety level of students belonging to urban area is 35 which falls in the category of extremely high anxiety and that of rural area is 26 which falls in the category of high anxiety. 't'-value (3.40) vide table-3 is significant leads to the conclusion that there exists difference in the anxiety level of students belonging to urban area and students belonging to rural area. Mean examination clearly exhibits that mean score (35) of anxiety in students belonging to urban area is higher than mean score (26) of anxiety in students belonging to rural area which means that students in urban area face more anxiety than rural area because the Students in the urban areas are scared by job opportunities, wide coverage of the syllabus including extra books for competition, teacher's qualities and methodology, more failures than passes. On the other hand, rural students also registered their anxieties in too many calculations, more failures, lack of exposure, teacher's qualities and too wide syllabus.



**Fig.2: Anxiety level among students of secondary students in relation to Gender, Locality and Type of School.**

't'-value (9.52) vide table -3 depicts that there exists highly significant difference in Students studied in government and private schools. It may be due to reason that they face different type of environment. Difference in the method of teaching, different books & this create a difference in the level of their anxiety. The cause of students' anxiety as revealed by the study includes wide coverage of the syllabus, low awareness of career opportunities, their teacher and his teaching methods. Mean examination shows that mean score (42) of anxiety in students of govt. school is higher than mean score (22) of anxiety in students of private school. It leads to interpretation that anxiety level of Government School Students is found to be Extremely High and anxiety level of Private School Students is found to be Normal.

### Findings

No significant difference was found in the level of anxiety of sec. school students in relation to gender while there was significant difference in the level of anxiety of sec. school students in relation to locality and type of schools.

### Educational Implications

The most outstanding characteristics of any research are that it contributes something new to the development of the area of concerned. On the basis of the above findings, the investigators are liable to have the following educational implications; It is a common perception that the anxiety among students is mostly related to achievement of students. The cause of Anxiety may be examination system, burden of homework and attitude of parents and teachers. A moderate amount of anxiety actually helps academic performance by creating motivation. It is, therefore, needed to find out the level of anxiety in school students. It is reflected from the results of the present study that there is extremely high level of anxiety among secondary school students which can be seen in the light of our evaluation system. Here we evaluate continuously each aspect of student development in terms of internal assessment. This in turn increases their level of anxiety. So implication of this study is that the evaluation system should be student friendly, so that students don't feel stress on them.

Another educational implication of this study is, less burden of home work, no to punishment and student friendly school environment will definitely reduce the level of anxiety among secondary school students. Equal opportunities to male and female and to all categories are also responsible for no difference in level of academic anxiety among male and female students of different categories.

The present study has its implication for parents, teachers, policy makers, administrators, central and state government, and all other bodies related to the development of the students at high school stage directly and indirectly. In the light of the present study all those who are engaged in the work of development of students at secondary school stage should take necessary steps for lowering down the high level of anxiety. Knowledge about academic anxiety is of immense worth both for teachers and learners and it will play an important role in teaching-learning process.

Schools offer an ideal setting for universal prevention activities with potential to reach large numbers of children and adolescents (Masia-Warner et al, 2006; Chatterji et al., 2004; Barrett and Pahl, 2006). Additionally, the school environment is likely to facilitate the acquisition of competencies in Indian children as it is viewed as a place of learning (Rambaldo et al., 2001). At school, students can be taught how to manage stress and anxiety and can practice skills. As a targeted intervention strategy, there is evidence to suggest that cognitive-behavioral treatment can reduce levels of anxiety among adolescents, for example Hudson et al., (2009) found that cognitive-behavioral skills are more efficacious in the treatment of childhood anxiety than a treatment that includes only nonspecific therapy factors.

Parent education is specifically required in the Indian context to deal with the phenomenon of educational pressure/anxiety and the comparison of the performance of one's own child with the best ranked students. However, further research is required to understand the ways in which culture and anxiety interact and to unpack risk and protective factors for the development of anxiety specifically in Indian adolescents.

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